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# The Philosopher's Martyrdom

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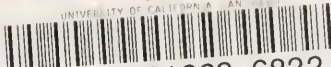
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Ernest Agnosto



THE  
PHILOSOPHER'S MARTYRDOM

*A Satire*

By PAUL CARUS

*Illustrated  
by*  
O. KOPETZKY



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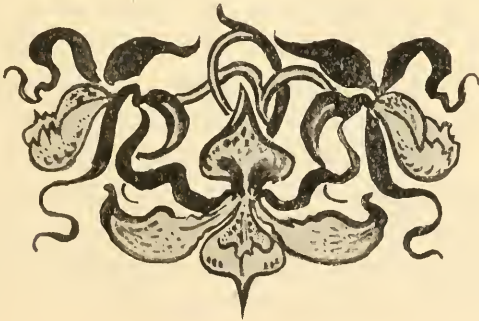
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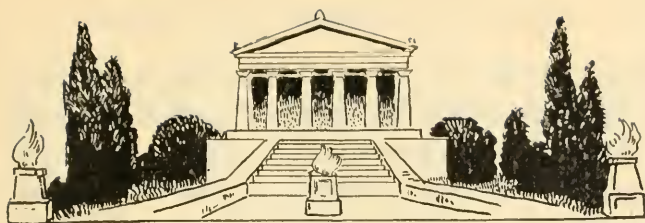


## CONTENTS:

	PAGE
Preface .....	iii
The Philosophers' Club .....	I
Mr. Agnosco's Ethics .....	12
At Home.....	21
The Seance .....	27
Adjourned sine die .....	36
The Greatest Number .....	43
The Temptation .....	50
Further Developments .....	58
Faithful to the End .....	65







## PREFACE.

**A**GNOSTICISM is the philosophy of the present age, which is a period of transition, and being such it will prove transient. I do not deny that there is a certain truth underlying the principle of agnosticism, otherwise it could never have gained the influence which it exercises over so many thinking minds, but this underlying truth has never been pointed out by any agnostic thinker, least of all by their chief, Mr. Herbert Spencer,—not even by Mr. Huxley whose high rank as a scientist no one will doubt. I do not deny the many excellent qualities by which Mr. Spencer, the representative of agnosticism, is distinguished, but leaving out all personal matters, I insist at the same time that agnosticism with all that it implies acts upon the mind as does a blight upon our wheat fields.

Agnosticism is a declaration of bankruptcy in philosophy, it acts as a brake upon the wheels of the advancement of scientific problems (note for instance Mr. Spencer's declara-

tion that any investigation of the origin of organic life must be useless!) and it proposes an utterly wrong maxim of ethics. In fact it destroys the very principle of morality by replacing it with the pursuit of happiness, and even with its principle of happiness it does not propose to establish a qualitative but a quantitative appreciation of happiness, as if the nature of goodness could ever consist in numbers! If the qualitative appreciation of happiness had been thought of it would have shown that not *happiness* is desirable but a certain *quality* of happiness which would have led back to the old-fashioned ideal of duty; and instead of tearing down the ideal of duty, a progressive philosophy would simply have revised our standard of valuation, our ideal of goodness, our conception of worthiness, and the aims of a worthy life.

Hedonism in any form is practically denial of all morality. Bentham's egotistical hedonism is immoral but logical. Mr. Spencer's hedonism, aiming at the greatest happiness of the greatest number, is illogical without thereby becoming moral. Why shall I sacrifice my happiness for the happiness of others, be they few or many? And suppose the majority to be villains, what then? Was it truly right that Socrates should drink the cup of hemlock,

because such was the pleasure of five hundred judges in Athens which at that time was guided by infamous and thoughtless rascals? No! and a hundred times no!

The question of right conduct lies deeper than our agnostic friends assume. The problem of moral goodness is closely connected with our conception of the nature of truth. Principles of moral conduct always reflect our view of life; they are a practical application of our world-conception. We believe in the possibility of truth and the usefulness of science. We reject most emphatically the philosophy of nescience. Problems can be stated and solved, and the correct solution of a problem is not merely an opinion that has gained currency but truth, i. e., a statement which is an adequate description of facts; and truth is possible, truth is not a mere subjective illusion.

Would the product of any calculation become right because it was the result of a majority of school boys,—or even of learned scholars? No, and a hundred times no!

We can not always change qualities into mere quantities, nor substitute pleasure and happiness for goodness, nor measure truth by majority decisions.

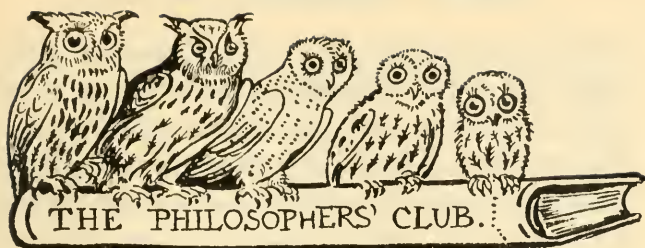
The present story is a tale with a moral. The story is humorous but the lesson is serious.

It is a satire, which has been written to point out the fallacies of agnosticism, and it indicates that a better philosophy is possible. How the author wishes that the hints here given may be taken to heart!

P. C.







SOME YEARS ago a philosophical interest was awakened in America. People began to study philosophy with a zeal characteristic of all the enterprises of the western world, and philosophical clubs were established all over the land.

At last the climax of civilization had been reached, for philosophy stood for the sum-total of all wisdom. Every little town had to have a philosophical club. There had been literary clubs, sociological and political clubs, anthropological clubs, art clubs, theatrical clubs, Delsarte clubs, and all kinds of clubs, but a philosophical club was something entirely new, and so there was some difficulty in starting it. In the old-fashioned clubs there was always something tangible. The members collected Indian arrowheads, or Chinese crockery, or they posed in pathetic attitudes and discussed principles of esthetics. But philosophy was so intangible and abstract, that it would not lend itself easily as a fit object for the interest

of fashionable society. This difficulty however only added a peculiar zest to the new fad and the leaders of the movement knew how to deal with it. They got hold of a few musty generalities mainly such as had a slight crack in them. As cracked china is always more valuable when it is old, why should not a philosophical idea, in the same predicament, also be more valuable? But, of course, it must, at first sight, be pathetic, overawing, and imposing—something sublime beyond the comprehension of any ordinary mortal, and, if possible, something actually unthinkable.

Thus the movement was started and resulted in a philosophical epidemic which thrilled all the people who caught the infection like a fever. They walked as in a dream. They regarded themselves as torch bearers of a great idea, and the establishment of philosophical clubs created at once an intellectual aristocracy. No wonder that the craze swept with rapidity over the whole country and extended also beyond the Atlantic to England and to the Anglo-American colonies on the European continent.

In one of the large capitals in Europe a philosophical club was founded, the president and leader of which was Mr. Charles Green, the son of an American father and a French mother.

Mr. Charles Green opened the first meeting

of the new club with a reading from Mr. Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*. He expounded them brilliantly. No divine ever explained the Bible better than he set forth the unfathomable depths of the prophet of a new dispensation. He read repeatedly the concluding words, as though he wanted his audience to memorize them. "Here, then," he emphasized, "is an ultimate religious truth of the highest possible certainty—a truth in which religions in general are at one with each other, and with a philosophy antagonistic to their especial dogmas. And this truth, respecting which there is a latent agreement among all mankind from the fetish-worshiper to the most stoical critic of human creeds, must be the one we seek—the Power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable."

The speaker dwelt on the fact that the deepest wisdom lies in ignorance. A philosopher is he who is not ashamed to confess his ignorance in plain terms. "Why, then, my friends," he said, "Why not confess our ignorance? Is it so difficult to part with the vain idea that we know something? No, it is not. On the contrary, it is a very pleasant idea, for we know that all knowledge is vanity. Consider only that the greatest scientist who has plodded through a whole life to find the truth, and has

accumulated an enormous stock of knowledge, is, after all, a shallow ignoramus. His knowledge is not philosophical knowledge. It is good enough so far as it goes, but it is of an inferior kind. The wiseacre of a specialist makes petty discriminations but is unable to appreciate the importance of generalization. And the most universal of all generalizations to which a philosopher only can attain, is the truth that the world-mystery is transcendent; and it is not a relative, but an absolute, mystery. I plead with you to throw off all the vanity of pretended knowledge, and the hope that science can accomplish anything worth mentioning, for nothing can replace the grand revelation of our eternal, irredeemable ignorance. Throw off all false pride; turn philosophers, and let us commemorate this memorable day on which we started this glorious philosophical movement, as the day of our second birth."

Here he assumed a dramatic attitude that he had inherited from his French mother. "Let us celebrate," he continued, "this great event, by turning over a new leaf, and pledge ourselves to become and to remain philosophers forever; to live and die philosophers, adopting the great truth of agnosticism. I shall, in this holy hour, change my name and

call myself Ernest Agnosco—Ernest, in order to denote that I am serious in becoming a philosopher, and Agnosco, to express my reverence for the greatest of all truths and the most general of all generalizations. My creed be henceforth that there is no wisdom except in an unfeigned confession of ignorance.”

The members of the club were carried away with Mr. Green's eloquence, and they praised his truly Socratic wisdom. Several resolutions were made in the spirit of his address, and all of them were adopted.

The motions might have been passed unan- imously, if it had not been for one single exception. One of the members, M. François Chevalier, was of a sarcastic turn of mind. He was the jarring element in that glorious meet- ing, a kind of Mephisto, and many thought it a pity that he had joined the club. We are impartial enough to say that it was well he joined, for difference of opinion is the salt of life and even in things evil there is something good.

Monsieur Chevalier sneered at the idea that a philosophy of nescience could accomplish anything useful, and he proposed the imperti- nent question, how Mr. Green—*alias* Mr. Agnosco—could manage to live according to his principle. Monsieur Chevalier confessed

that we knew very little, but what little knowledge we had was the basis of our conduct, of our achievements in practical life, and of our ethics. Philosophy, if it is to be of any purpose at all, must be applicable to practical life.

Monsieur Chevalier's opposition created a sensation, and it almost threatened to bring about a schism. Not that any one agreed with him, but they differed among themselves in refuting his proposition. Some thought that philosophy was not to be applied to practical life. Philosophy is too grand, too sublime. Others declared that philosophy afforded all that could be desired, for it lifted the members of the philosophical club at once above the mediocrity of mankind, and opened a field of vision from the height of the largest of all generalizations.

There was among the members of the club a stumpy young man of Dutch extraction whose name was Thomas Driest. His lively little eyes, deep-socketed underneath a large and bony forehead, had been riveted with keen interest upon each successive speaker, and now that he rose to his feet he betrayed an unusual fanaticism. He almost quivered with impatience as though he could no longer control the passionate outburst of his conviction. He addressed Monsieur Chevalier personally and



said "By way of introduction I will state at once, Monsieur, that I am a socialist."

"Thank you for the information," replied Monsieur Chevalier. "It means that whatever business, profession or trade you may have embraced you made a failure of it."

"Say rather," retorted the stumpy young man with a flash in his eye directed at his opponent, "that I belong to the large mass of the discontented and my profession is that of a reformer. Most assuredly there is something wrong with the social order which is cunningly arranged so as to favor the unscrupulous and drive the good and the honest to the wall. All your boasted Universities and institutions of learning are in the paid service of capital. They obscure the real issue of a just distribution of the products of labor and thrash out the straw of hollow theories. I challenge our philosophers," he shouted at the top of his voice, "to drop all quibbles of metaphysics and respond first to the demand of the people. I hail agnosticism as a relief from tyranny of the schools, for it disposes of all philosophy in a most direct and summary fashion."

Turning again to Monsieur Chevalier, he asked whether he had ever heard of Socrates who was deemed wise because he owned he was ignorant. Nor was this grand philosophy

of nescience without its practical application. He should remember the bequest of the great Voltaire, which was condensed in the words *écrasez l'infame!* The old gnosticism had been in power long enough. It had built cathedrals and established thrones, but the age of agnosticism was now dawning upon mankind. "Here lies the practical application of agnosticism" shouted Monsieur Driest, wildly gesticulating with his arm, as if he wanted to assault Monsieur Chevalier, "Agnosticism will tear down the pretensions of priest and prophet. They talk about things such as God, the soul, and immortality, of which no one knows anything, of which no one can know anything. They are frauds! and remember Voltaire's advice *écrasez l'infame!*"

Monsieur Chevalier replied calmly, "If no one can know, how is it possible for you to know that the priests are wrong? It seems to me agnosticism will furnish the best support for any superstition because in the realm of the unknowable all theories are equally admissible."

"Oho!" cried Monsieur Driest, "You are a reactionary and a defender of superstition. Mind you that gnostics claim to know, while agnostics freely own their ignorance. Gnostics



are false pretenders, agnostics in their confession of ignorance are genuine."

Monsieur Chevalier forgetful of all parliamentary order, laughed heartily, "Yes," he said, "if their ignorance be genuine."

Here was a lull in the debate, for Monsieur Driest felt that his adversary had made a thrust at him, but he was not quick enough to understand its meaning. Monsieur Chevalier then added in a semi-conversational tone, "Monsieur Driest's reference to Socrates reminds me of Schiller's distich,

"Pythia dubbed him a sage,  
When of ignorance boldly he boasted.  
Friend, how much wiser art thou!  
What he pretended, thou art."

Monsieur Driest was boiling with indignation and Mr. Agnosco resented the unparliamentary remark, but Monsieur Chevalier assured him that his quip was harmless and should not be taken as personal. This explanation was given in a gentlemanly way and with so much courtesy that Monsieur Driest calmed down and took his place again.

At this juncture Mr. Agnosco noticed the presence of Professor Le Clair, of the Sorbonne, and called upon him for his views. The Professor, however, declined to commit himself saying that he did not intend to join the

club, for he believed in the cultivation of science. He knew that there was also nescience, and he himself had plenty of it; but for his own part he tried to get rid of his share, and so his philosophy could only be a philosophy of science, not of nescience; it should be a general survey of all the sciences, especially an explanation of knowledge itself and the methods pursued in scientific enquiry.

No one contradicted and no one assented, and all discussion ceased for the time.

Mr. Agnosco took the word once more and declared that many good ideas had been uttered by all the speakers. Although he disapproved of the attitude of his friend Monsieur Chevalier, he felt under obligations to him for some suggestions. He had to confess in all sincerity that there was an inkling of truth in his remarks concerning the applicability of philosophical truth. Philosophy must become practical, and he himself meant to apply philosophy to practical life. "But," said he, "in the enthusiasm for the great cause we have forgotten the limit that time imposes upon all finite beings." And so he suggested that a motion to adjourn was in order, proposing at the same time to study in the next session, the ethics of agnosticism. "The best book on the subject," he added, "is Mr. Spencer's *Data*

*of Ethics.* A perusal of this great work will teach us that agnosticism is in possession of ethics. As yet men of science are, at best, only very superficially acquainted with philosophy, and with the grand conclusion to which its arguments lead."





## MR. AGNOSCO'S ETHICS.

SEVERAL sessions were devoted to the study of Mr. Spencer's ethical system. Monsieur Chevalier made many objections but they were set aside, and he was told to wait until they had gone over the whole work.

A special meeting was devoted to a discussion of the ethics of agnosticism. Professor Le Clair was among the invited guests and Monsieur Chevalier read a paper. He dwelt on the idea that Mr. Spencer's great principle of "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" could not be derived from the maxim of a general nescience concerning the world-problem. The philosophy of evolution should teach an ethics of evolution; and the ethics of evolution does not so much teach us to aspire for happiness, either of self or of others, as, without shunning pain or seeking pleasures, to become strong so as to be fit for survival. He said, "I, for one, do not think it a sin to enjoy myself; but if I act with that end in view or to promote my own happiness and that of

other people, I do not pretend to be ethical. I think, too, that it is very pleasant to do something for the enjoyment of others, but I do not relish the idea that a man, depriving himself of comforts to provide for the pleasures of others, should be regarded as obeying the moral law. If it were so, giving a ball, or gathering one's friends for merry-making and carousals, would be a highly commendable and praiseworthy act. I believe that immorality if pursued long enough will always lead, if not to unhappiness, most certainly to ruin. For immorality, in my opinion, is that which disagrees with the world-order. Immorality is that which makes a creature unfit to exist. Morality is that which fits us for life; but pleasureableness is not a criterion by which we learn to discriminate between good and evil. Does not our happiness vary with our temper? Shall we have as many different kinds of morality as we have kinds of happiness?"

The speaker was severely criticised, and attempts at refutation were made in different ways; though most of them appeared more like writhing under strokes that had hit a vital spot, and only one of the debators was able to boast of having spoken to the point. This was Monsieur Driest, who insisted that the contents of life were feelings, and that pleasurable feel-

ings were desirable, and unpleasurable feelings undesirable. "We want the former, and the more of them, the better. We shun pain and we have a right to do so."

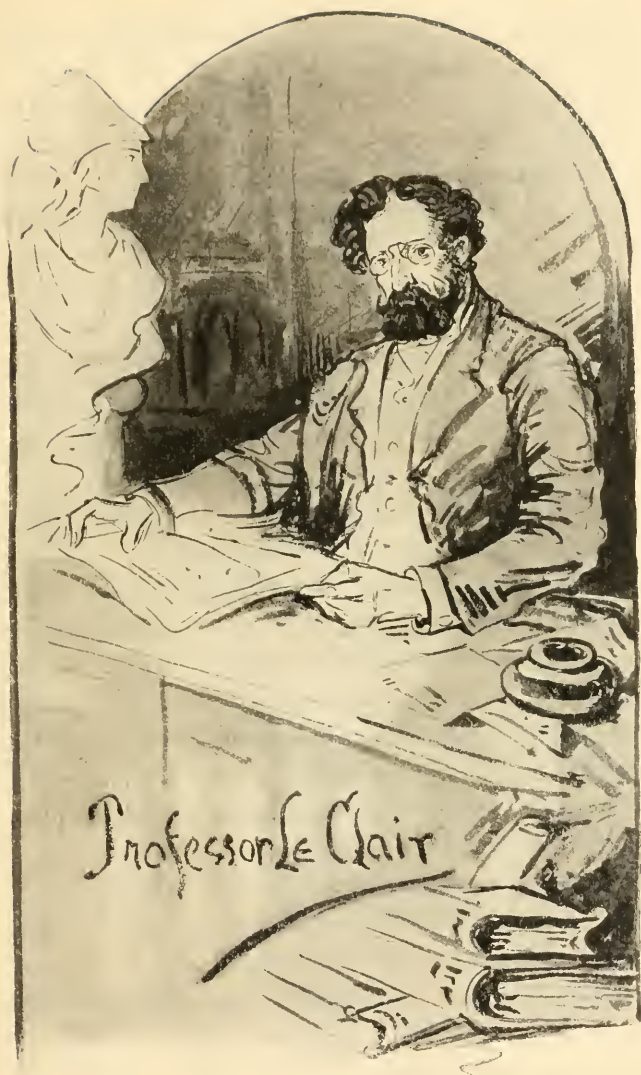
At this moment a priest who had so far remained unnoticed, rose from a seat in the last row of the audience. Mr. Agnosco recognized in him a well-known clergyman, in fact one to whose congregation his French relatives belonged. He was introduced as Father Jerome and he said:

"This young man has obviously little experience. Had he seen more of life he would know that pleasures are not always desirable. Far from being the purpose of life, pleasures are its dangers, and it is the duty of every educator to warn the inexperienced against the perils of the sweets of life."

Professor Le Clair was now called upon but he refused to take part in the discussion before the nature of pleasure and pain had been clearly defined. Mr. Agnosco replied at once: "That is scarcely necessary. According to the great Kant, pleasure is a feeling that indicates growth, while pain indicates decay."

The Professor remonstrated: "Pardon me sir, but this interpretation of the nature of pleasure and pain is a gross error. Growth frequently causes pain and there are cases of





Professeur Le Clair





decay accompanied by pleasure. It is true that pain is caused by disturbances such as the laceration of tissue, and so whenever growth causes a disturbance, it will be painful. Pleasure," he added, "is a more complicated phenomenon, but I might briefly say that pleasure is felt at the satisfaction of a want."

Not wishing to let the discussion be switched off, Mr. Agnosco interrupted the speaker by saying that pleasure and pain are ultimate facts, and that that ought to suffice for the present purpose.

Professor Le Clair, however, was not so easily silenced. He continued his opposition saying: "Even if that were true, you must grant that the tastes of people differ. What is a pleasure to one is an abomination to others. Accordingly pleasure can never be either a guide in ethics or a standard of morality. The question of the ethicist can not be 'What will give most pleasure to most people?' but 'What ought to give pleasure to the people?' Morality remains after all a question of the ought."

Mr. Agnosco was on the verge of losing his patience but he quickly collected himself and proved to be master of the situation. He proved, with great adroitness, that whenever we did not know, we were at liberty to act as we please. The old gnostics of religious rev-

elations pretended to know much and told us many things that we ought to do. Thus, he declared with emphasis, the negative knowledge of agnosticism has some positive value. Philosophy comes as a liberator from any pretended or false knowledge. It shows that we know nothing, and that we can know nothing; that all the vainglorious gnosis of preacher and priest is at best guesswork, and mostly even fraud. We know nothing of any moral authority whom we have to obey. Accordingly, we can act at our pleasure. Pleasure is good in itself, and we have only to avoid those special forms of enjoyment which do others harm. And this leads to the great generalization of making the greatest possible amount of pleasure of the greatest number the criterion of goodness. Monsieur Chevalier, he added, showed in this session not only a lack of logic, but also of republican principles.

Mr. Agnosco was a zealous republican, and was a member of the Chamber of Deputies, where he was one of the severest critics and opponents of the imperial government. Monsieur Chevalier was a republican also, but as Mr. Agnosco expressed it, "only in name"; for Monsieur Chevalier did not see that right or wrong could be decided only by a majority vote. He would apparently deprive the people





of their privilege of making their will the supreme sovereign of all government. Nor could Monsieur Chevalier understand, on the supposition of pleasure being the criterion of ethics, how any one could be obliged to sacrifice his own pleasures for the pleasures of the majority.

“Granting,” he continued, “that pleasure is good in itself—that it is the thing to be desired as the highest good, I do not see how, by the common rules of logic, you can prove to me that I ought to sacrifice my pleasures for the majority. Tell me plainly, why shall we submit to their dictates?”

Here Monsieur Driest joined in the debate. He replied quickly and sharply, “Our fellow beings are sentient beings exactly as much as we ourselves, and we have to respect their sentiments.”

“Well, then,” retorted Monsieur Chevalier, “do you mean to make sentiment the ultimate test of approval, so that whenever the greatest amount of pleasurable feeling results from an action, such action is right? and *that* alone is to be considered good?”

“Yes,” replied Monsieur Driest, “I do mean to say that.”

“I have a farm in the country,” said Monsieur Chevalier, and I raise sheep. Do you suppose the shepherd’s actions should be reg-

ulated by a majority vote of the living and feeling beings around him? The sheep are just as much living and feeling beings as you and I and the shepherd are. The sheep cannot speak, but we have sufficient means of knowing what their pleasure is, and it is certain that they would object to being slaughtered and eaten, perhaps also to giving up their wool, and there are more sheep than men on the farm. The same is true of all cattle, and it is most likely that there are more brutes living in the whole world than men. Should the conduct of human society be regulated by that which we know would be the pleasure of the majority of living and feeling beings on the earth?"

Mr. Agnosco denounced these arguments as trifling with a serious subject, and declared that as a matter of course, a limit ought to be drawn somewhere; and he meant to draw it between the sentiments of rational and irrational beings.

"That is a valuable concession," interrupted Monsieur Chevalier. "If the criterion of ethics shall be found in the sentiments of rational beings only, why not express the idea thus: that rationality shall be one of the marks by which we recognize a moral act? And, to be sure, rationality could not be decided by a

majority vote. We might as well accept or reject the Pythagorean theory according as it pleases or displeases the majority."

Mr. Agnosco resented the sarcastic tone of Monsieur Chevalier's arguments. "We are little helped," he said, "by witty remarks which have no bearing on the question. They deserve no answer; but, for the sake of the audience, I am willing to respond to these queries. The greatest number of rational beings means the greatest number of men. They have a right to enforce their will, although it should conflict as little as possible with the interests of the minority. But, wherever a collision is unavoidable, it must be regarded as the minor evil, and the minority, if need be, must make this sacrifice to the common welfare."

"Exactly so," interrupted Monsieur Chevalier. "It is necessary to bring sacrifices for the common welfare, but I deny that the pleasure of the majority constitutes the common welfare. The will of the majority has nothing to do either with morality or with right or truth. Suppose we make a calculation, and I do it correctly, while you all make the same blunder, will you maintain that my calculation is wrong because you constitute a majority? No, whatever you may say to the contrary,



there is something else besides the amount of pleasure that makes things true and untrue, right and wrong, moral and immoral. One man may be right in the face of the whole world; and that action may be wrong which pleases the majority of all."

It was shown to Monsieur Chevalier that it was very unlikely that all would make exactly the same mistake. It was granted, that anybody was liable to make mistakes, but the mistakes of many counterbalance and correct one another, so that the right would in the end necessarily result.

A vote was taken at the end of the discussion in order to decide which was the correct principle of ethics, and the maxim of the greatest happiness for the greatest number was adopted by an overwhelming majority vote.

Mr. Agnosco, after this glorious session, congratulated the club on its grand success, and proposed that the members pledge themselves to live according to the maxim they had so enthusiastically endorsed. He himself solemnly vowed that he would never fail to do his ethical duty, and be obedient to the behests of morality, his ideal being the greatest happiness of the greatest number of the society of human beings in which he lived.





## AT HOME.

“**H**OW pleasant is the lot of an agnostic! He has made his peace with all the world, for he grants the truth common to all, the orthodox believer and the infidel free-thinker, the spiritualist and the materialist; the scientist and the man of practical life.”

Such were the thoughts of Mr. Agnosco when he surveyed with great satisfaction the numerous guests that were gathering for an “at home” to which they had been invited in his palatial home. The honors of the house were performed by the Madame de Beauchamp and Miss Green, the host’s sisters, who were assisted in their task by Mademoiselle de Beauchamp, Mr. Agnosco’s niece and presumably heiress to his fortune.

Mr. Agnosco was a great advocate of marriage which he considered a duty to be performed for the welfare of mankind. But strange contradiction of human nature! He himself had never been able to make up his mind to marry, although in other respects he

always lived up to his principles with a seriousness that was unexpected in an avowed hedonist.

Perhaps Mr. Agnosco had learned caution by the unfortunate fate of his sister who had married a jovial French nobleman, commonly referred to as the Baron, who though poor, was witty, amiable, and a perfect gentleman, with but one fault not uncommon in aristocratic circles. He was a practical hedonist, not for the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but for himself. Being wise and provident, and knowing that the future is uncertain, he always preferred the present pleasure to mere probabilities in the future, which unfortunately imparted to him an incurable habit of dissipation.

Madame de Beauchamp's married life consisted of a short honeymoon, and of a series of subsequent quarrels on account of debts and for several other causes, alternating with pleasant scenes of reconciliation, based upon solemn promises never to do it again,—always quickly forgotten and broken. But all these troubles were no longer considered, and only the bright side of the past remembered when as a natural result of the Baron's irregular life his health became undermined, and after a short illness he left his wife a disconsolate widow, hence-

forth devoted exclusively to the education of her child, little Adelaide.

Mademoiselle de Beauchamp was the perfect image of her father,—a typical French beauty with just a sprinkling of American tradition to render her the more interesting and attractive.

Miss Green, Mr. Agnosco's elder sister, was a quiet unassuming spinster and a great reader of spiritualistic literature. She was horrified by modern psychology,—the psychology without a soul, and was naturally very anxious to have proofs of her immortality. She loved to consult mediums and attend seances. Since the evidences there received were always somewhat questionable, she remained open to conviction and was willing to acknowledge the truth from whatever source it might come.

The great problem of after life was a favorite topic of conversation with her sister, Madame de Beauchamp. While Miss Green was an enquirer, sometimes dejected by doubt and sometimes elated by an optimistic conviction, Madame de Beauchamp remained always undisturbed in her faith. She was an Episcopalian, but without strong prejudices against Catholicism, the avowed creed of her late husband and also, according to a promise given at her marriage, of her daughter Mademoiselle

Adelaide. The latter attended church regularly which was to her an esthetic pleasure, but to the great regret of her confessor, Father Jerome, she was otherwise religiously indifferent.

The evening was decidedly interesting on account of the unusual variety of people that met here on the common ground of Mr. Agnosco's hospitality to different views. There was Father Jerome, a Catholic clergyman, and Mr. Dooper, of San Francisco, the renowned American medium. Professor Le Clair gave an air of scientific dignity to the gathering and Monsieur Driest by his inexhaustible sarcasm, made it lively for the conservative guests of the party. The chief butt of his jokes was the aged Father Jerome, and Mademoiselle de Beauchamp seemed to enjoy these tilts, for the father confessor was much too serious for her frolicsome temper. She was wont to obey him, however, because he assumed authority over her; and womanlike she submitted, though she did it grumblingly. Now there appeared a man who dared her tyrant, and she looked up to Monsieur Driest with admiration.

At first the curé was very patient and confessed modestly that he himself had many doubts and misgivings about the doctrines of religion; what kept him up, he added, was the conviction that the kernel of his faith was gen-







uine, for he felt it as a living power, and it would be a miracle indeed, if it were all error, mere fraud, or pure superstition.

“One miracle more or less should make little difference to you,” jeered Monsieur Driest, “but it would at least be a miracle that happens now.”

“Oh,” replied Father Jerome, “many Biblical miracles are repeated constantly. The miracle of Balaam happens even to-day.”

“What do you mean by Balaam’s miracle?” inquired Monsieur Driest with a provoking grin.

“That an ass talked,” said the clergyman almost in an undertone but sufficiently audible to all bystanders, and turned slowly away.

Monsieur Driest clenched his fist and Mademoiselle de Beauchamp turned purple; she felt as though she should come to the rescue of her hero who had boldly attacked her tyrant. “Père Jerome,” she exclaimed indignantly, “I protest, I protest!”

“You are right, my dear,” said the Father calmly, and stood for a moment musing, “I made a mistake. It is a bad blunder and you have a right to protest. It was not an ass, it was a she-ass.” With these words he walked away to a safe distance.

Mr. Agnosco poured oil on the troubled

waters by stating that jokes could not decide important questions, especially as the opposed parties presented merely subjective opinions as to theories, the verification of which is absolutely impossible.

“The problem of miracles, as all other religious questions, lies beyond the pale of human knowledge, and in this indubitable truth I occupy a middle ground, which makes me shake hands with the priest, and also with my infidel friend Monsieur Driest. They quarrel only because each oversteps his limits and mistakes his private belief for positive knowledge.”

“Excellent; Excellent;” applauded Mr. Dooper, “Mr. Agnosco has spoken well. Like him, I neither affirm nor deny the occurrence of miracles. But I investigate. All open-minded people investigate, and I invite all those who are open-minded to attend the seance which I shall give next Sunday evening at my rooms at the Hotel d’Angleterre. But I would advise you to procure tickets in advance, for we can accommodate only a limited number of visitors.







ABOUT thirty persons had been invited to Mr. Dooper's seance, and among them were Miss Green, Mademoiselle de Beauchamp, Monsieur Driest and Mr. Agnosco. They were distributed in different corners according to some occult arrangement devised by the medium's wife, who acted as general manager. It was noticeable that she conducted affairs with circumspection, although to what purpose was not evident. Mr. Agnosco was assigned a place between the seats of his two sisters, and when Mrs. Dooper observed how Mademoiselle de Beauchamp was flirting with Monsieur Driest, she said with a smile: "I suppose the chain will be but the stronger if I seat you together." She thought to herself "Lovers are not counted dangerous, they are too busy with themselves," and so Mademoiselle de Beauchamp and Monsieur Driest were seated together near the chair of the medium.

When the circle was completed, Mr. Dooper

entered in company with a venerable looking old gentleman.

“Ah, Monsieur le Professeur!” exclaimed Mrs. Dooper, “*Vous donnez nous l'honneur!*”

Monsieur le Professeur bowed and proceeded at once to make a little introductory speech in good French, saying that it was scarcely necessary to introduce a man of Mr. Dooper's fame, but he did it because he had been urged to do so. He further descanted on Mr. Dooper's occult powers. “Here,” he exclaimed, “are phenomena that have awed the greatest thinkers, and are sure to throw light on all the problems of religion, science and philosophy, —the problems of four dimensions, of curved space, of telepathy, of spirit existence, of immortality, and so forth. Indeed it is probable that the key which will unlock to our astonished minds all the riddles of life and the universe will ultimately be discovered here in the mysterious realm of the human soul.”

A warm applause greeted Mr. Dooper after this introduction by the venerable-looking gray beard, when he stepped forth before the audience with downcast eyes as if oppressed by the praise that had been allotted him with such great prodigality. He spoke French with a decided American accent, and his modesty made him stammer. He thanked his learned

friend whose works on the mysteries of spiritualism had established his well-deserved reputation, but protested that Monsieur le Professeur was mistaken in one point. "I make no claim," he said, "to possess occult power. It is true that I have witnessed and experienced some strange phenomena when in a hyper-sensitive state, but I am convinced that every man can do the same thing if he only develops his psychic powers. I do not believe in miracles, so called, but I do not doubt that many strange things formerly considered as miracles are in perfect accord with the psychic laws of man's nature. I am not a philosopher, not a scientist, I am simply a sensitive, and as such I offer myself up for investigation."

Mr. Dooper concluded with some flattering remarks to his audience which was exceptionally distinguished, and then began with making a few tests of his spiritualistic powers. He addressed himself first to strangers, and told some particular things out of their lives which no one could know excepting themselves, and his statements were always verified.

Suddenly he turned to one side and gazed intently into the vacant space, as if he wanted to make sure that he had no visions. "I see there an aristocratic figure of medium size," he said in a whisper, "I can hear what he says.

He turns his face toward that lady in black silk and exclaims, 'Forgive me. If I were still living I would prove to you that I love you, I love you only.'" Madame de Beauchamp was greatly moved, and Miss Green cast a triumphant glance over to her brother, as if to say, "Here, you infidel, is an unequivocal evidence of the truth of spiritism!"

Now a chain was formed by joining hands and the lights were turned out. The medium sat in the midst of the chain, his hands being held by his neighbors.

For a time absolute silence prevailed, but soon strains of music seemed to float in the air. A guitar hovered over the heads of the audience, and was played by unseen hands. The effect was most wonderful.

Soon afterwards spirits materialized and then a ray of light lit up parts of the room where weird faces could be seen. Once there appeared the face of Socrates, then an Oriental beauty, perhaps Cleopatra; then a young Greek hero, possibly Alexander the Great. None of them spoke.

After a pause of absolute quiet a match was struck. A hand was visible without a body but it withdrew at once into the surrounding darkness, leaving a little lamp burning in the center of the room. Over the lamp the expect-

ant watchers beheld the dim outlines of a tripod, from which a cloud of white fumes was rising; and there in the fumes were dancing tiny little elves. The audience was breathless.

Suddenly the elves retired and in their stead appeared the figure of a fine-looking gentleman. "The baron!" exclaimed Miss Green. "My husband!" shrieked Madame de Beauchamp, who had been greatly agitated before by Mr. Dooper's vision. Now her excitement reached the state of hysteria, and she began to cry aloud, "Come back, I will forget and forgive! Oh, come back to me!"

The scene became painful and her brother Mr. Agnosco who sat next to her patted her back and stroked her forehead, but before he could speak a sonorous woman's voice began to sing. It was Mrs. Dooper and her words were distinctly pronounced so as to be quite intelligible to all present. She was soon joined by several persons in the audience to whom the words as well as the melody were apparently familiar. Even Mr. Agnosco felt the consolation of the song which ran thus:

“There is a land so wondrous grand  
So beautiful and fair.  
It is the glorious spirit land,  
And God's own home is there.

“Oh how I yearn to see this land  
 My heavenly home above,  
 The spirit land, so wondrous grand,  
 The land of God and love.

“There our departed dead are found  
 Thence do their voices greet,  
 And thither also we are bound  
 And there we all shall meet.”

“I am all right again,” said Madame de Beauchamp, “Do not let me interrupt the séance!”

In the meantime the tripod had disappeared and it was dark again. Then a dim streak of light made visible a figure who had been promised before as the veiled prophet. The specter glided noiselessly through the room, when suddenly Monsieur Driest broke away from the chain, and with one bounce leaped upon the mysterious apparition clutching it tightly with both hands. The ghost struggled in vain to free himself, and Mrs. Dooper cried: “Let go sir, or you will regret your rashness as long as you live.”

But Monsieur Driest did not let go. He shouted “Turn on the light! I want to see the ghost by light. I am not afraid of spooks.”

The lights were turned on and there was the medium in a state of perfect collapse hanging helplessly in Monsieur Driest's arms.









Mrs. Dooper rushed to the place and began to scold: "How dare you disturb the séance? You impudent villain!"

"Impudent villain indeed!" sneered Monsieur Driest, "Please bear in mind that all the impudence is on your side. How dare you to impose upon us,—you and Mr. Dooper and all your accomplices. I have exposed you and you ought to be handed over to the police as frauds."

With these words Monsieur Driest let go Mr. Dooper, who fell to the floor in either a real or a pretended swoon. His wife bent over him with anxious solicitude and was hiding something in her bosom. Monsieur Driest claimed afterwards that it had been a mask.

Mr. Dooper was covered with a white veil, and was without shoes. He was trembling with wrath but he kept himself well under control.

"Playing the ghost dressed up like that!" said Monsieur Driest without compassion.

Finally the medium opened his eyes in a vacant stare and wiping the perspiration from his forehead, asked in a hollow voice "Where am I?"

His wife was kneeling by his side and all others stood around in silence. "Where am I?" he repeated, "I have been in a trance.

The last I remember is that I sat on that chair yonder, when I felt the spirits come. Then I felt a jerk as if the veiled prophet wrenched my body from off my soul and forced me into the grip of that man there,—an awful man, a meddlesome man, an atheist.”

Turning to Mrs. Dooper he continued in appealing tone, “You know, my dear, what spirits do when an impious mortal attempts to lay hold upon them. They cannot be seized by earthly hands but are compelled to substitute the medium by whose power they have been conjured up to hold communication with spirits of the living. Of course I must needs be found in the young man’s clutches when he tried to soil the garments of the spirits with his desecrating touch.”

“Yes! That is the way the spirits do!” said Miss Green who was still trembling with excitement, but regained quickly her self-assurance. “Ghosts can not be caught. They always substitute the medium. That is exactly what we ought to expect!”

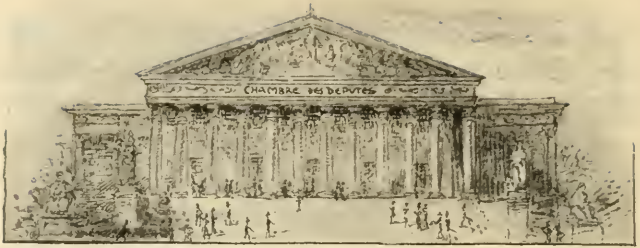
When Monsieur Driest saw a great number of the faces of the audience nod assent, he looked quite sheepish. He thought he exposed the medium and rendered all belief in spirits forever ridiculous, but instead the very witnesses of “the exposé” remained as staunch

in their belief as ever. He turned to Mr. Agnosco in indignation quoting Schiller's famous line,

“Against stupidity even God will fight in vain.”

Mrs. Dooper shrugged her shoulders contemptuously saying: “Mr. Dooper is fully vindicated,” while Mr. Agnosco added, “I will say this much, that the mysteries of occultism are beyond the comprehension of man.”





## ADJOURNED SINE DIE.

PUBLIC interest in philosophical questions seemed to be on the increase, and the room of the club meetings had been transferred to a large hall. The sessions were always lively and sometimes the discussions were very heated. The quiet members who abstained from taking an active part in the debates always had a good time, for it was interesting to watch the onslaught by Monsieur Chevalier and Professor Le Clair against the agnostic position which was victoriously defended by Mr. Agnosco and Monsieur Driest.

Mr. Agnosco was at first quite pleased with Monsieur Driest who always approached him as a docile apostle, but he began to take a dislike to him on account of the attention he bestowed on his ward Mademoiselle Beauchamp. The case had grown more aggravating, because she did not let an opportunity slip to encourage her suitor and to show at the same time her resentment of her uncle's apparent reluctance

to give his consent to the young man's attentions.

Monsieur Driest used to accompany Mr. Agnosco to the meetings of the Philosophers' Club, and finally ventured to ask him for the hand of Mademoiselle Adelaide. Mr. Agnosco answered that the two were apparently not well matched, and that a marriage would not be conducive to the general happiness of the parties concerned.

Monsieur Driest, always ready with an answer, claimed that he himself and Mademoiselle, were the parties most concerned in this alliance, and they ought to know best what kind of happiness they wanted. Though they were quite willing to recognize her uncle's authority as guardian, he in his turn as an agnostic, should not impose his views of happiness on others.

Mr. Agnosco hesitated to acknowledge the force of Monsieur Driest's argument but showed his willingness to reconsider his decision.

In the meantime they had arrived at the hall of the Philosophers' Club, and Mr. Agnosco called the meeting to order, which by an untoward fate was to be the last one; and it was memorable for the many quips and tilts on both sides.

The subject of the meeting was "The Limi-

tations of Science" and Mr. Agnosco proved plainly and without fear of contradiction that man was a limited being, and therefore the range of his knowledge must be limited. The more the light of science spreads, the more it reveals the absolute darkness by which we are surrounded.

Monsieur Chevalier on the other hand explained the nature of knowledge to be based upon the tendency of our rational faculty to interpret a particular case as an instance of a universal law, and so the chemist not only knows how the elements act and react in his retort, but how they behave elsewhere, how they have behaved at the time of the formation of our solar system, and how they will behave ever afterwards.

"Do you mean to say," asked Mr. Agnosco, "that man may be able to become omniscient?"

"No, not at all," replied Monsieur Chevalier, "but in deciphering the facts of experience we become acquainted, not merely with isolated items, but with examples of universal laws which reveal to us the constitution of the universe."

Monsieur Driest came to Mr. Agnosco's rescue. "Even physicists," he said, "are agreed that our senses are limited. We can hear sounds only within certain limits of pitch



and we can see only such rays as possess definite qualities. To impressions to which our senses are not adapted we are deaf and blind."

"Oh, but," objected Professor Le Clair, "though the fact is true, the conclusion drawn from it is wrong. We do not hear sounds that are too low or too high, and we do not see the chemical rays of light; but while the senses are limited, man's mind is unlimited. How is it that we know anything about them at all? The answer is simple. Physicists invent instruments which register sound waves of any description, and we make sensitive plates exhibiting the traces of those chemical rays which our eyes do not perceive. Mr. Auguste Comte who advocated this same principle of agnosticism of the limitations of science chose as an instance that man could never know what the sun consisted of. He deemed his argument irrefutable because he was sure that no chemist could walk over to the sun and put a piece of it in his retort. But in the meantime Bunsen and Kirchhoff invented the spectrum analysis which analyzes the chemical elements in the light that they emit, and so his argument has been upset."

"Though science may unravel many things," cried Monsieur Driest who wanted to make himself useful to Mr. Agnosco, "there are some

problems which will forever remain unsolvable. For instance,—how the world originated, why it exists, and why in place of existence there is not non-existence?"

"Certainly," retorted the Professor. "But you will observe that all these problems have no sense; they are not legitimate problems. All legitimate problems can be answered. I do not say that they can be answered now, for with our present stock of knowledge we may not be able to answer them. Nor do I say that we shall ever be able to exhaust all the riddles that life offers us to solve. But I say that if there is a question that is *per se* unanswerable, or a problem that is intrinsically unsolvable, it is illegitimate. Knowledge is a description of facts, and facts are the data of our sense-impressions. The work of science consists in the methodical arrangement of our data so as to enable us to comprehend why they are different under different conditions. Thus we anticipate the course of events and learn to adapt ourselves to suit our convenience. All the legitimate problems have ultimately a practical purpose, but now you come and ask why are there facts at all. That question is as illegitimate as if I would ask you why is a circle not a square?"

Here a difference of opinion arose between

Monsieur Chevalier and the Professor as to the significance of the illegitimate or unsolvable problem.

“It seems that we all agree better than Professor Le Clair and his friends imagine,” said Mr. Agnosco, “for he must concede that the problems of infinity and particularity, of God and soul, of immortality, of the purpose of existence, the origin of life, the nature of matter, of space, of time, and so forth and so forth, are all illegitimate because unsolvable, and so we might as well bury all our differences and make a fraternal covenant for the actualization of the hedonistic principles of agnosticism, which means, in other words, to pledge ourselves always to live for the greatest happiness of the greatest number.”

While thus Mr. Agnosco tried to make peace between the contending parties, a messenger brought a dispatch addressed to M. Green, member of the Chamber of Deputies, which summoned him at once to an extra session of his party. There had been, in these days, a great political excitement. Rumors of war disturbed the public mind, and it seemed as if the government planned great enterprises for the aggrandizement and promotion of the country's good. Mr. Agnosco had always opposed all government measures, and at present he

was also opposed to the imperial policy. He belonged to the party that desired peace; so, when he received the dispatch, he was anxious to go, in order to make his influence felt among his friends.

The Philosophers' Club adjourned *sine die*, all members being too much agitated by the political news to continue their abstract discussion. It seemed as if they were now to find a great occasion for practically applying the ethical principles of their philosophy to real life. They left the hall thrilled with the desire to live for the greatest good of the greatest number.





## THE GREATEST NUMBER.

MR. Agnosco hastened to the meeting of his party. It was only a few blocks distant, but it took him more than half an hour to reach the place. The boulevards which he had to cross were filled with long processions of people bearing lanterns, flags and festoons. While he was waiting for a chance to slip through their files to the other side of the street, he stopped to read some of the inscriptions: "Down with the enemy!" "*À Berlin!*" "The people want war!" and other exciting mottoes. When he reached the hall where his party met, he found his friends possessed of the same spirit. It seemed as if the whole nation had been intoxicated with plans of conquest, martial renown, and the spirit of revenge for some unknown offences.

"My friends," Mr. Agnosco exclaimed, as soon as he reached the platform, "do not be carried away by this passion of excitement instigated by an imperial usurper for the sole purpose of strengthening his throne. Consider



how terrible a thing war is. Imagine the horrors of a battle-field, the agonies of the dying, the sufferings of the wounded, the sorrows of widows and orphans. Can you wish for war which inflicts so much pain, and has no equivalent of pleasure?"

Mr. Agnosco was roughly interrupted by his friends. One of them rose and shouted with a stern voice, "I wonder, my friend, that you have so little sympathy with the most powerful impulse which thrills through our souls. Do you not care for the glory and aggrandizement of our country? What is all the suffering you speak of in comparison to the happiness of the nation? The pain will pass away, but the glory remains. Yes, more than this, there is an unspeakable pleasure in dying as a hero on the battle-field for one's country! If you weigh pleasure against pain, the balance is greatly in favor of undertaking this most glorious war. Who would be so chicken-hearted as to shrink from sacrificing his life for the greatness of his country, and for the happiness of the grandest of all nations? Our party stands on this principle; let the people rule. If we oppose the will of the people, we shall lose all our influence, and our political enemies will point at us as unpatriotic citizens: while our armies conquer our adversaries, the liberal party will

be pilloried as having antagonized the public welfare and the glory of our country. Let us not oppose the people's will. The people desire war; let them have it. Let our nation march on at the head of civilization, to rule Europe, and through Europe, the whole world."

The people wanted war, and they had war. Mr. Agnosco's opposition was lost in the general excitement, but he was soon satisfied with the course of events when he convinced himself that the majority of the nation preferred the pleasures of war to the pleasures of peace, and was willing to bear the disasters which a war might bring. It is true that the declaration of war was made on a mere pretense. The occasion was almost too slight for a mere quarrel, but the people dreamed of great victories, extensive conquests and rich spoils. Everybody expected a surplus of happiness as the ultimate result, so Mr. Agnosco, too, finally joined the war party.

The enthusiasm did not last long, for the disappointments came quicker than anybody anticipated. Defeats took the place of victories and the situation became desperate.

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The Philosophers' Club met no more. When the members saw one another in the streets, they talked politics instead of philosophy.



Only once was Mr. Agnosco reminded of his ethical principle. Monsieur Chevalier stopped him in the street and asked him of what use had been to him his maxim that all actions should bring about the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

Mr. Agnosco replied, "It came about exactly as I presaged. There are no pleasures in war; nothing but pain. Those who conjured up the spirit of war made gross miscalculations."

Monsieur Chevalier replied, in a sarcastic tone, "I doubt very much whether, according to your principle, the action of the emperor and our representatives in parliament is not perfectly justified. There are pains enough in war, and it is we who have to endure them. But there are also pleasures in war, and it is our enemies who enjoy them. But then, our enemies constitute the majority, and if the happiness of the greatest number is the aim of your actions, you ought to be satisfied with the outcome of the war. If I were in your place, I would thank fate that thus it allowed you to remain a moral being. Think how immoral it would have been if our nation, constituting the minority, had derived a greater happiness from this ominous war than our enemies!"

"My dear friend," replied Mr. Agnosco,

“you are a scoffer, but there is more truth in your words than you might be willing to concede. The principle is quite correct, and if a greater happiness of a greater number can be brought about by our sufferings, we suffer justly.”

Monsieur Chevalier shook his head. “I have a different opinion. The happiness principle in ethics is a very good thing for those that are happy. It works well in prosperity, but it ceases to be of any value in the time of trials and misfortunes. It is a very poor comfort for those whose fate condemns them to be counted among the unhappy, even though they may constitute the minority.”

Mr. Agnosco had no time for further argument. He was too busy. “Those who have to suffer in order that the greatest happiness shall be enjoyed by the greatest number ought to do so with resignation and in perfect contentment,” he said with dignity and hurried away.

There is nothing so evil but it has a good side. The misfortunes of war brought deliverance from tyranny. The emperor was dethroned, and the country was declared a republic. It was now the turn of the liberal party to regulate the affairs of the nation. It was a great opportunity for Mr. Agnosco, but he was more disappointed in his hopes than

before. The avalanche once started is not easily stopped, and one revolution may be followed by another. So the proclamation of the republic was superseded by the declaration of a socialistic constitution for the nation. And this second revolutionary movement came so unexpectedly and the republicans who had just come into power were so little prepared for it that the capital was at once in the hands of the socialists.

Mr. Agnosco being the leader of the republican party, was arrested. A mob of ragged men led him before a tribunal of the new city government and clamorously demanded the punishment of a man who had done his best to prevent a rising of the masses to take their share of the common prosperity.

Mr. Agnosco protested against their accusation. He declared that he had devoted his life to bringing about the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and did not see any offence in his aspirations.

The chief judge—a man whose real name was unknown even to his nearest friends, for they generally called him Dynamite Jim, because he had proposed to blow up all government buildings with dynamite—said to Mr. Agnosco, “You seem to be a sensible man, and that may save your life. I am glad to see that





we agree in principles. You are known as a rich man. You have grown wealthy by robbing the poor. It will be but just to give up your possessions for the benefit of those whom you have despoiled. We shall forgive you your former trespasses committed in withholding for your own benefit that which might have made many thousands happy. We will spare your life on the condition that you swear to leave this country and nevermore to return. Your property shall be duly used for the great cause to which you have devoted your life. Instead of serving to promote the happiness of one, we shall use it to promote the happiness of many."

There was no other chance of escape for Mr. Agnosco than to accept the proposition of Dynamite Jim. He swore to give up his property and to leave the country.

His views concerning the happiness of the greatest number were different from the views of the ragged crowd that surrounded him, but the mob constituted the majority, and they certainly must know what kind of happiness suited them best. When he left for Havre with the small sum that had been granted him by Dynamite Jim and his friends, he carried along with him at least one comfort: His misfortunes were more than overbalanced by the pleasures which others derived from his loss.





## THE TEMPTATION.

ACCOMPANIED by two commissioners of the Commune Mr. Agnosco was going to leave Paris on the Gar du Nord, when he was greeted by Professor Le Clair who had come, so he said, to bid his old friend good-bye. They sat down in the restaurant and the commissioners joined them in a glass of wine. After a while Monsieur Driest dropped in, too, as by accident and while he engaged the commissioners in a discussion of socialist principles now on the verge of realization in Paris, the Professor whispered to Mr. Agnosco, "We have prepared everything for your escape. You have simply to absent yourself for a moment and leave the station by the south entrance. Jump into the cab that is waiting for you at the restaurant on the opposite corner."

"How shall I recognize the cab?" asked Mr. Agnosco.

The driver wears a red ribbon on his hat and the number is 2317," said Professor Le Clair. "He will take you to a safe place in the coun-



try, where you can hide till the communistic régime has been overthrown. The days of its power are numbered. Meanwhile you may peacefully philosophize in the solitude of a garden home about the unknowable and the widest generalizations of religious truth."

Mr. Agnosco frowned. "Do you mean to say that I should change my conviction which is so well grounded?"

"I doubt that it is well grounded," retorted Le Clair, "Your unknowable is a bugbear of your own making."

"Oh!" interrupted the agnostic philosopher, but the Professor continued: "What I see and touch and observe I can describe, so as to recognize it when I meet it again. Knowledge is description, and comprehension is nothing but pigeon-holing a fact together with that set of facts to which it belongs."

Mr. Agnosco's eyes lit up. He forgot the urgent demand of the moment for the sake of argument. "Look here," he said, "All cognition is subsumption under a wider generalization; pigeon-holing you call it. Very well! The widest generalization can not be subsumed under a still wider one, *ergo* it is incomprehensible."

"My dear friend," urged the Professor, "the widest generalizations contain those traits of

reality that are most general, and therefore most common, and therefore best known. It is true that on account of their very simplicity they exhibit certain problems more patently than less general concepts. Therefore agnostics are mystified by them more than by other terms. But leave all argument alone and think of your safety. Be off, before the commissioners suspect our plan."

Mr. Agnosco was about to rise when a look from one of the representatives of the commune made him hesitate. At the same time he fell to musing and said pensively: "Is it right for me to flee? Would it not be better to live up to the moral maxim that has become the ideal of my life?"

"Will you patiently submit to the mandate of a mob authority?" hissed the Professor in his ear.

"Think of the greatest happiness for the greatest number!" replied Mr. Agnosco pathetically.

Professor Le Clair ejaculated some indistinct syllables on the greatest number of villians. "What do I care for the greatest number of anything; I will not be guided by numbers. Let us submit to the best, the wisest, the noblest, not to the rabble, even if it be the majority. I believe in quality, not in quantity."

“You are an aristocrat, a royalist, a reactionary, a legitimatist, a Bourbon, perhaps an Imperialist, but no republican!” shouted the zealous philosopher.

The Professor’s temper began to be roused too. “I am a republican,” he retorted, “a better republican than you are, but in my ideal republic law would rule supreme, not a majority. Majorities are good enough to elect magistrates and representatives to decide on the adoption of laws,—but laws should apply to all alike without discrimination, without favor and without spite. There should be no laws that make exceptions. Minorities have rights too. A republic that does not respect the rights of minorities, is the worst possible state imaginable. Remember that wisdom rarely takes its abode with the masses. But let us postpone our arguments to a more seasonable hour. Think of your safety!”

“Think of my safety?” queried Mr. Agnosco; and his voice assumed a heroic tone, “What did Socrates do when a mistaken majority vote had condemned him to death? He deemed it his duty to stay; he scorned the thought of flight! Do not lead me into temptation. I will go where duty calls!”

With these words Mr. Agnosco turned to the commissioners, whose heads began to be heavy.

and reminded them of their duty not to miss the train. There was pathetic dignity in the philosopher's attitude, and when the three mounted the train that carried them to Havre de Gras, he looked like a man that was conscious of having won a victory.

"You see, Monsieur Driest," said the Professor when they returned home together on the top of an omnibus, "The end of an action need not be the greatest amount of pleasure and the least amount of pain expected thereby. I grant that this theory which you upheld some time ago, holds good for average cases, but the fact is undeniable that the sense of duty, irrespective of pleasure and pain, is an efficient factor in the complicated mechanism of the will."

Monsieur Driest groaned. "It is only a peculiar kind of pleasure to live up to one's principles. People attend to their duty because it makes them feel happy to think they are virtuous."

"Well! You may put it that way," said the Professor, "but then you must grant that there are ideas which cause people to change their ordinary views of desirability, call it happiness, or pleasure, or duty. And this being granted you will understand that the most important element in a motive is not

feeling, but the thought behind it. Ideas are directive elements which give character to feeling. Errors in energetic persons may lead to most lamentable actions, and the most superstitious, yea even criminal acts, may subjectively be moral. Jephthah sacrificed his daughter as a burnt offering to Jehovah, not because it extended to him hope of some future happiness, but because he believed that Jehovah required it of him. King Manasseh made his children pass through the fire, and we may be sure that he loved them. The Grand Inquisitor condemned many heretics to the most dreadful torture because his conception of God required it so. Giordano Bruno, rather than recant his philosophy, allowed himself to be burned alive."

"They must have expected a great reward in heaven," retorted Monsieur Driest, "it would be unnatural for any being to act otherwise than seeking pleasure or avoiding pain."

"My dear young friend," replied the Professor, "you judge the world from the data of your own experience. Because most of the conscious acts of your own life are determined by the principle of seeking pleasure or avoiding pain, you think all actions are such. It is a wrong generalization. A fighting cock fights at the sight of his rival, even if he is

sure to be defeated without any ulterior thought of pleasure or pain. The fighting impulse is in him, and he fights when sufficiently instigated. These motor ideas are like wound-up springs which work according to their nature when the proper button is pushed. It is true that men will always be influenced by a craving for pleasure and a fear of pain, but pleasure and pain are not the sole motives that sway man's mind."

After a short pause, while Monsieur Driest was still pondering these arguments, the Professor added, "He is a weakling who is guided by a consideration of pleasure and pain alone! A man of character is willing to bear sacrifices for his ideals. This is not a question of theory but a mere statement of fact; and," added he, "this is the reason that it is so important that we have the right kind of ideas, the right kind of religion, the right kind of philosophy. I have a great respect for Mr. Agnosco. He has a noble heart, but he sacrifices himself for a will-o'the-wisp."

Monsieur Driest had always been a foe of religion in any form, so he objected to Professor Le Clair's mentioning religion and philosophy in one breath as if they were the same in kind and similar; but the Professor, though himself a *libre penseur* insisted that such was



the case, for every religion as well as every philosophy is a world-conception, the leading ideas of which determine our actions. Religions are popular philosophies and religious truths are mostly stated in allegories, sometimes in myths, or in dogmatic symbols. It is difficult to avoid symbolism even in science and philosophy. Religions are approximations to truth. The history of religion is an interesting chapter in the gradual advance of civilization, for religion reflects the world-conception of the average mind, practically applied to moral conduct.

“What a queer man you are!” replied Monsieur Driest, “Sometimes you are so radical in your views, and then again you would furnish an excuse for, or even a defense of such a fraud as religion.”

The omnibus had reached the *Place de la Madeleine*, and the two men separated. The Professor went to his study while Monsieur Driest loitered along the Boulevards, and finally bent his way to his favorite resort, the *Moulin Rouge*.







## FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS.

WHILE passing through some narrow street, he entered the second class restaurant to take some refreshments and there he joined two young fellows in a debate on socialism. He loved to preach his doctrines to others and usually did so with success, but this time he had reason to regret it, for some ruffians who had listened to his talk suspected him of being a German spy, on account of his foreign accent. He tried in vain to tell them who he was and that he had devoted his life to the emancipation of the downtrodden classes. His assailants would listen to no arguments and answered him with blows.

Monsieur Driest had frequently denounced the authorities for interfering with the people; he often claimed that no government was needed for keeping order in society, and now he actually shouted for the police. But in vain; no officer was near to rescue him from the hands of the mob. Finally he made a bold dash for liberty and broke through the circle





of his opponents. Being hotly pursued, he ran for his life, and gained indeed a little headway. On turning a street corner, he succeeded in hiding unobserved in a little church the doors of which were just being shut at the very moment he reached the place.

All was the work of a moment. The fugitive entered, the janitor bolted the door and the mob swept past the church howling for the German spy who had disappeared as if spirited away by magic.

The curé of the church together with a brother clergyman happened to stand near the entrance, and both understood at once the situation. The latter was Father Jerome. He at once recognized Monsieur Driest and introduced him to the curé who was at first somewhat shocked, for Monsieur Driest was well known as a public speaker, perhaps better as a demagogue, to use the term which conservative people applied to him, and also a contributor to the anti-religious press. There stood the fanatical friend of the downtrodden masses terrified by the mob and pleading for protection. The curé then took this outspoken enemy of the Church to the parsonage and Father Jerome washed his wounds: "Who would have thought," said the good Samaritan, "that

Monsieur Driest would ever in his life seek refuge in a church!"

It was time for lunch and the curé invited his two guests to share his frugal cheer. There they sat, these three unequal men: the host, a simple-minded believer in all the doctrines of his Church; Father Jerome, an educated man who in spite of his doubts preserved his allegiance to the Church on account of his respect for tradition; and the infidel agnostic and scoffer.

In response to some jokes of the two clergymen, Monsieur Driest set forth his philosophical view that we could neither affirm nor deny anything relating to the chief problems of religion, to which quite unexpectedly to Monsieur Driest both priests *uni sono* consented, only they applied the doctrine in the opposite way.

"Look here," said the curé, "I have seen a good deal of life and I know that man can not comprehend the world, nor its Maker, nor his own being, nor even his purpose in life and his fate after death. There is no man on earth who will ever find out anything about it. Now there is this powerful institution, the Church; it is an answer for every question, it tells me what to do, its teachings give millions of souls comfort, its saints have performed miracles."

“Yes, miracles,” repeated the curé when he saw a sarcastic curl on the lips of Monsieur Driest. “I believe in miracles. It is easier to believe in miracles than in all the contradictory nonsense of science, that mollusks change into quadrupeds and monkeys into men, or what not. Science is the biggest humbug the world has ever seen, and all the *esprits forts* bow down before this Moloch of modern paganism in idolatrous worship. Laugh at me as you please, but you confess yourself that no one knows, that no one can ever know. I will tell you why, because the world is full of miracles and you can not comprehend miracles. This is a practical philosophy based upon the facts of experience. So far as I am concerned no one can refute me on my own grounds.”

Not knowing how to contradict, Monsieur Driest made no reply; the ostentatious assertiveness to which he was ordinarily addicted had received a damper through the awkward situation that forced him to accept the hospitality of his antagonist, and Father Jerome said: “I should not have thought that you two would agree so well. Your practical philosophy or pragmatism as it might be called, is nothing but agnosticism turned back.”

“Surely,” assented the curé, “the agnos-



tics have made the glove that fits my hand, but the glove must be reversed before I can use it. I am not a thinker, I am a man of common sense. I am not yet 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.' I am too healthy for that. You know the fall of man is due to his eating of the tree of knowledge. Thinking is the original sin, and science is the height of human vanity. Man wants to be like God, knowing what is good and evil. I tell you man can not know everything, but can obey and he ought to obey. Man can do his duty. I did not know what to make of the pretenses of science, but now agnosticism comes to my assistance and proclaims the bankruptcy of science. I accept agnosticism as an assured truth, and upon this rock I build my pragmatic philosophy."

Father Jerome shook his head but said nothing. He did not agree with the curé, yet he did not want to come to the assistance of Monsieur Driest.

Monsieur Driest left the parsonage in a puzzled state of mind. He believed in egotism and would justify the extremest claims of egotism, but here his egotism had failed somehow and he did not know what to make of it. The more he thought of it, however, the more he became confirmed that all the kindness he had



just received was mere hypocrisy. "There are no white ravens," he murmured between his teeth, "and if there are, they are the exceptions which prove the rule."

That same afternoon he and Mademoiselle Beauchamp went to a magistrate in the Palais de Ville to be duly married. During the trial of her uncle, she had, with the assistance of her mother and aunt, cleverly taken possession of the greatest part of his bonds and other investments, and had them deposited in a bank in Brussels. After Mr. Green's departure they had at once divided the spoil evenly among themselves, which left to each one a fair competence to live on.

Monsieur Driest was exultant with joy when he was seated by his pretty bride in the evening train bound for Brussels: "My dear," he said, "I am proud of having gained your love. I hope you will show me your confidence by letting me take charge of those papers which you have procured from the safe of your unfortunate uncle."

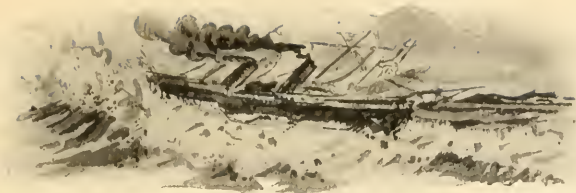
Madame Driest looked at her husband in astonishment and not without anxiety due to fear of a difficulty which she had not anticipated. At last she said: "Please do not trouble me with business affairs,—not now,—at least not now!" She thought of all the

misery of her mother's married life and the thought flashed up in her soul with a sudden power; "Oh what a fool I have made of myself!" It would have been a relief to her if she could have shouted these words aloud, but she shut her mouth and laid her hand over her eyes to prevent her husband from reading her mind.

Monsieur Driest looked at his bride searchingly as he thought to himself: "If I do not come in possession of your fortune, Madame, I may regret that I ever married you!"

The train started and Madame Driest heaved a deep sigh. She foresaw troubles which she had not dreamed of before, but she was determined not to yield, even if the final outcome would be a divorce!





## FAITHFUL TO THE END.

THE steamer "Plaisir" on which Mr. Agnosco sailed was bound for some far off country in the southern seas. But she never reached her destination. During the voyage the ship was struck by a terrible hurricane. She foundered not far from an island, and all the passengers except Mr. Agnosco were drowned almost in sight of land. He alone was fortunate enough to swim to shore. But, alas! the island on which he had been lucky enough to save his life was inhabited by cannibals. They captured him and put him in a cage to be fattened for their greatest annual festival which they called "Thanksgiving Day."

The cannibals of the island were unusually polite and civilized, and Mr. Agnosco had leisure enough to learn their language. He attempted to convert them to his philosophy, but great was his astonishment when he found that they agreed perfectly. They also believed in the greatest happiness of the greatest num-

ber, and their High Priest took much trouble in explaining to him his situation. "It is a maxim of ours," he said, "to slaughter all white men who happen to be cast ashore. Their life among us, if we suffer them to live, would be only a series of unendurable annoyances to themselves and also to us. Accordingly it is better for them to die than to live and have a surplus of pains over pleasures. A man has to die anyhow, and he will have an easier death if he is slaughtered at the butcher's than if he die piecemeal on a sick-bed. And if he is dead, I can assure you that there is no pain in being eaten, while the pleasure of eating is indubitable.

"You of course deny," he added, "that there is any pleasure in eating human flesh. But that is only your one-sided view of the subject. I understand perfectly that you, in the predicament in which you are at present, are prejudiced against our institutions. But you will readily grant that we must understand better what gives us pleasure, than you do. We cannot make you the judge of what our happiness should be."

Mr. Agnosco was sensible enough to understand that any remonstrance was in vain; nor would it have been a fair demand on his part to let his own views of happiness be the crite-

tion of the happiness of others. Everybody must know best what gives him pleasure.

There were hours when he began to doubt his philosophy and its ethics of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, but he put his doubts down manfully. The theory of nescience had left him adrift in life, and he had been victimized again and again by the greatest numbers. Nevertheless he could not have been mistaken. Agnosticism is recognized as the most advanced thought of the age in both Europe and America and so, argued he, "I am but a martyr of philosophy."

When Thanksgiving Day came he ended his life with perfect contentment, for he was conscious that he had lived up to the principles of his ethical maxim. He had contributed all he could to increase the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and he died a martyr to his convictions.

No tombstone marks the place of his last abode. But the people of the cannibal island keep his memory green. They still praise the tenderness of the white man who furnished them with the daintiest—at least in their opinion, daintiest—Thanksgiving meal they ever enjoyed.







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